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SUBJECT: KENYA MOYALE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER ON THE OROMO
LIBERATION FRONT AND ETHIOPIAN MILITARY

11. (SBU) Summary: The District Commissioner of Moyale, on Kenya's border with Ethiopia, admits that the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) uses his district as a sanctuary, despite his best efforts. He expresses annoyance with the "hostile" attitude of his Ethiopian counterparts and with the Ethiopian military's habit of ignoring the border when in hot pursuit of OLF fighters without even bothering to notify Kenyan officials. He also hinted at exasperation with the lack of attention and resources he receives from Kenya's central government to cope with his district's security issues and infrastructure needs. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Vincent Okioma, District Commissioner for the Moyale District of Kenya's Eastern Province, spoke with PolCouns about the activities of OLF fighters and Ethiopian military in his region. Okioma frankly admitted that "Moyale district is a sanctuary for OLF fighters." He stressed that the Government of Kenya does not support the OLF, but noted that many OLF fighters have relatives among the Moyale District's Borana community. "When they visit their relations we cannot tell them apart from the local population." (Note: Kenya's Borana community is for all practical purposes identical to Ethiopia's Oromo community. End Note.) Okioma insisted that "when we are able to identify OLF fighters, we arrest them." He noted that when his administration moves against OLF elements, Borana politicians and community leaders "accuse us of political persecution." (Note: The Borana community in Moyale District elected the KANU candidate in the July by-election, rejecting the pro-government NARC-Kenya candidate. End Note.)

13. (SBU) Okioma claimed that the Ethiopian military "ignores the border when in hot pursuit of OLF fighters. They do not even bother telling us they are coming over the border." Okioma went on to say that "our problems with the Ethiopians are at the level of the regional government. The national government says all the right things, but the regional government administration is hostile and aggressive toward us. They falsely accuse us of supporting the OLF." Okioma alleged that some former OLF fighters engage in banditry on the Kenyan side of the border for personal gain, while current fighters do the same to raise funds for their cause.

14. (SBU) Comment: The northern half of Kenya is sparsely populated and very lightly administered. It receives scant resources and attention from Kenya's central government. Northern Kenyans often say that "Kenya begins at Isiolo," a reference to a town 350 miles to the south. Moyale is connected to Isiolo by a mere dirt track. Ethiopian Moyale is connected to Addis Ababa by a very serviceable tarred road. Okioma is clearly annoyed with the unfriendly treatment he receives from his Ethiopian counterparts, but he also hinted at exasperation with the lack of attention and resources he receives from the central government to cope with his district's security issues and infrastructure needs.
RANNEBERGER